



# FIRST THINGS FIRST

*Ready for School. Set for Life.*

## Communications and Government Affairs Committee Meeting

**June 30, 2011**

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

#### **Call to Order**

The Regular meeting of the First Things First – Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board, Communications and Government Affairs Committee was held on June 30, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the First Things First Office, 4000 North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, AZ 85012.

Chair Saunders called the meeting to order at 1:12 p.m.

#### Members present:

##### In person

Chair Vivian Saunders

Dana Naimark

Bettina Nava

Paula Hale

Gretchen Jacobs

Bill Adams

Brian Spicker

Yvonne Hunter

Hector Youtsey (arrived at 1:40 p.m.)

##### Telephonically

Jane Strain

#### Members Absent

Steve Lynn

Will Humble

Suzanne Pfister

Chair Saunders directed staff to change the set-up of the room to better accommodate group discussion.

#### **Introduction and Committee Charter Review**

Chair Saunders asked the members and staff present to introduce themselves. Chair Saunders reviewed the committee charter with all members.

#### **Acceptance of the Agenda**

Chair Saunders reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

A motion was made by Member Adams and seconded by Member Hale to accept the agenda as presented. Motion carried.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Chair Saunders asked members to review the minutes from the February 24, 2011 committee meeting.

A motion was made by Member Hunter and seconded by Member Nava to accept the minutes as presented. Motion carried.

### **Presentation/Discussion of Year 1 Strategic Communications Results and Message Testing**

Liz Barker Alvarez, FTF Vice President for Communications, presented the results of the Year 1 implementation of the FTF Strategic Communications plan and the most recent message testing.

FTF met or exceeded its 3-year goals in two out of three performance measures. The most recent message testing showed that the messages currently being used continue to resonate with a broad audience. In addition, messages that link reading success by fourth grade to quality early education tested very well.

Ms. Barker Alvarez went over some preliminary recommendations regarding revised benchmarks for Years 2 and 3 of the Strategic Communications plan. The recommendations were slightly conservative, but still significant. Ms. Barker Alvarez explained this was due to the fact that it is impossible to gauge the impact that the November 2011 ballot initiative on FTF – and the resulting political campaign – had on the increases in public awareness. Therefore, staff wanted to set goals that were aggressive, but achievable.

*Member Hunter* inquired about the steps taken to ensure that the awareness survey accurately reflected the opinions of Arizonans. Ms. Barker Alvarez reported that – in addition to requiring that the survey have a margin of error of +3.4% at the 95% confidence level – our survey contractor was required to achieve a sample size that mirrored the gender, age, racial, geographic and ideological diversity of Arizona.

*Member Jacobs* asked whether thought could be given to having specific messaging aimed at parents. She liked the idea of messaging that encouraged parents to become engaged in their child's early education.

*Member Nava* asked whether the research indicated where individuals were getting their information about early childhood and whether that information informed FTF's strategy. Ms. Barker Alvarez said that it did.

*Member Adams* said he was impressed with the results, but reminded the group that awareness was low to begin with and so could only go up. He complimented the Communications Unit on the success of Year 1 implementation. He said, anecdotally, he can tell that awareness is going up as he meets with people and they know more about early childhood and FTF.

Member Youtsey joined the meeting in person at 1:40 p.m.

*Member Jacobs* asked whether Twitter could be used to help disseminate parent tips. She indicated that she, as a parent, would participate on Twitter if she thought she could get useful parenting information there. Ms. Barker Alvarez indicated that social media is one area in which FTF grew this year, and an area of significant focus for Year 2.

*Member Hale* cautioned about using messaging tied to 4<sup>th</sup> grade test scores, lest this create the impression in the public that FTF's work alone can help those improve significantly. She said internal workgroups looking at indicators of FTF's success decided against using 4<sup>th</sup> grade tests scores as an indicator for that reason (although this measure still will be monitored).

*Member Adams* raised the question of how viable Twitter is as a mechanism for disseminating early childhood information. Ms. Alvarez explained that there is a great deal of research about the immense popularity of social

media and the use of mobile devices among various groups, particularly those of child bearing age. Beverly Russell, FTF Senior Director for Tribal Affairs, also indicated that there is research on the popularity of mobile devices for sharing information among Tribal communities.

*Member Hunter* suggested that, in addition to measuring awareness of early childhood and FTF, that the agency consider adding some measure regarding tangible actions on behalf of young kids that result from increased awareness. FTF Chief Executive Officer Rhian Evans Allvin said Member Hunter made an excellent point. She added that the cross-tabs from the research were still being looked at, and that perhaps establishing measure for improving support for early childhood among specific populations was also an option.

*Member Naimark* agreed that support needs to be tied to tangible action on behalf of kids.

*Member Spicker* added his congratulations to the Communications Unit for the enormous progress on building awareness of early childhood, but encouraged FTF to look for ways to turn that awareness to action.

*Member Nava* asked whether increases in the number of people accessing early childhood services could be used as a measure of success. CEO Allvin indicated that each FTF grantee is required to provide information on the target service units for each strategy and their progress in achieving those targets. Ms. Barker Alvarez further explained that the number of people accessing early childhood is a measure that would focus only on parents, and that FTF's public awareness efforts are focused on measures of increased awareness of early childhood across a broad spectrum of audiences, not only parents and caregivers.

*Member Naimark* inquired about the recommendation to include new creative for the spring 2012 and FY 2013 paid advertising strategy. CEO Allvin explained that this was in response to feedback from regional council members, some of whom thought the current creative did not carry an explicit enough early childhood message. Member Naimark indicated that – while she initially shared that opinion – she has paid careful attention to the campaign as it has unfolded and she thinks it is very effective. Member Naimark cautioned against changing the creative, indicating that she'd hate to see FTF abandon messaging that has been very effective.

*Member Naimark* asked staff to clarify the difference between paid advertising with an educational message versus a programmatic message. CEO Allvin gave the examples of the importance of reading daily to children as an educational message, versus recruitment in to the early education field as a programmatic message (since it's tied to specific FTF-funded strategy).

*Member Youtsey* said he'd like staff to give some thought to including some issue-specific messaging – such as the messaging used by Mission:Readiness that ties early childhood to military preparedness. He said talking about our current challenges and how a focus on early childhood can help turn things around could be very effective. Ms. Barker Alvarez said the Year 2 plans include 60- and 90-second video vignettes along those lines.

*Chair Saunders* said she feels that FTF's efforts have been very helpful for adults to understand that we all have the responsibility to help children be successful.

### **Community Outreach Overview**

Diane Umstead, FTF Senior Director for Community Outreach, presented on the progress of the community outreach strategy. She briefly reviewed information about outreach activities that showed that progress in recruiting early childhood champions has been affected by the availability and consistency in staffing across the various regions. She also provided information about the fact that many outreach activities have focused on early childhood organizations, which is important, but that future success depends on a more disciplined approach to reaching target audiences.

*Member Spicker* asked what the biggest challenge is now. Ms. Umstead indicated the K12 and faith communities.

*Member Adams* suggested that Ms. Umstead and her team focus on business officials in school districts; they are having a conference soon. CEO Allvin indicated that school business officials had unofficially supported the ballot initiative to eliminate FTF because they felt the funding was needed in K12.

*Member Hunter* suggested that staff think “out of the box” when considering outreach to women’s groups. She indicated previous efforts by other groups to reach women have focused on non-traditional locations – such as beauty salons – and organizations, like the Girl Scouts or Boy Scouts. She also suggested – in terms of business outreach – that FTF look at employee or volunteer teams within those businesses.

*Member Adams* suggested a community outreach plan similar to a business plan. Ms. Barker Alvarez indicated that the Year 2 plan for community outreach is similar to a business plan and will have detailed action steps, targets, etc., for reaching one particular audience per quarter. The four suggested audiences are K12, women, 55+ and faith.

*Member Spicker* suggested that FTF not abandon the idea of outreach to the business community, but that instead of focusing on corporations and chambers of commerce, that FTF focus instead on the small business community, since their employees’ kids are the ones benefiting most from early childhood services.

*Member Hunter* suggested outreach to the League of Cities and Towns at their upcoming conference and also to the Small Business Association. In addition, she suggested that outreach to chambers of commerce focus on the education and workforce development committees.

*Member Naimark* said she liked the idea of business outreach focusing on smaller, more local businesses. She also supported the idea of focusing Year 2 efforts on going deeper with various Year 1 audiences.

*Member Strain* indicated that the local chamber of commerce in Sierra Vista has been very supportive of early childhood. She suggested that outreach efforts with parents may want to focus on the community college system, where many young and working parents are studying.

#### **Tribal Affairs Presentation/Discussion**

Beverly Russell, FTF Senior Director for Tribal Affairs, presented information on the FTF Tribal Affairs philosophy, which works in four major areas: organizational relations, government-to-government relations, cultural relations and tribal relations.

Ms. Russell also went over highlights from the June 2011 Board report on Tribal Affairs. She and Director Allvin highlighted their recent trip to Washington, D.C., where they met with various high-ranking tribal officials. She also indicated that FTF has received praise for its work with tribal communities, most recently from HHS Deputy Assistant Secretary Joan Lombardi. She reviewed various presentations FTF Tribal Affairs has given at local and national conferences. Ms. Russell also talked about FTF’s upcoming tribal consultation on the school readiness indicators.

Ms. Russell ended her presentation by showing members the FTF Tribal Fact Sheet, which describes how 17 Arizona tribes are partnering with FTF, the amount of FTF funding allotted to those tribes, and the location of those tribal communities.

*Member Hale* commended FTF Tribal Affairs for the comprehensive nature of recent and current activities. She discussed an upcoming grant opportunity. Ms. Russell and CEO Allvin indicated that FTF is reviewing that opportunity, but that applications may be limited to research universities.

Ms. Russell told members that a monthly Tribal E-bulletin she has compiled for internal staff will soon be distributed to board and regional council members, per their request.

*Member Hunter* asked whether Ms. Russell had met with university groups focused on Tribal groups. Ms. Russell indicated she has met with a national sorority.

Chair Saunders praised the FTF Tribal Fact Sheet, and said the map was particularly helpful.

#### **Government Affairs Presentation/Discussion**

Sam Leyvas, FTF Vice President for Government Affairs, presented some background information on sources of funding for the child care subsidy program. He and CEO Allvin indicated that talks have begun and continue with the Governor's Office over what, if anything, can be done to preserve federal funding for child care subsidy. CEO Allvin assured members that the Governor's Office has no intention of kicking 13,000 children off of child care subsidy on July 1. She said there is still time for thoughtful discussion because the federal fiscal year doesn't end until Sept. 30. She said there has been progress in looking at whether FTF can leverage its resources to affect policy changes regarding child care subsidy, including how to transform subsidy in to something that focuses on improving access to quality early learning for kids in working families, versus simply being part of the social safety net.

Mr. Leyvas provided background and a timeline around the Early Learning Challenge Fund. CEO Allvin indicated that she and Board Chair Steve Lynn recently attended a meeting in the Governor's Office of groups that would be instrumental in developing AZ's application, if there is one. She said the group was very receptive to FTF's ideas.

CEO Allvin reported on her and staff's recent trip to Washington, D.C. and the various policymakers FTF staff met with on that trip.

*Member Hunter* said she feels FTF has a great story to tell policymakers. She suggested that FTF start working now with committee chairs to get on agendas early and that the agency focus on presenting to caucuses, as well.

*Member Hale* asked whether any effort had been made to present to the Congressional Native American caucus. Ms. Russell indicated that FTF is on the record as available to meet with or speak to both the state and federal caucuses.

CEO Allvin indicated that she did some preliminary outreach to policymakers that focused primarily on freshmen lawmakers. She said those efforts were hampered by FTF's lack of a government affairs person.

*Member Hunter* said FTF needs to start its policymaker outreach very early in the session. Member Hale suggested afterschool day at the legislature. Member Hunter said efforts should include families impacted by FTF services in hearings and committee meetings.

*Member Spicker* asked whether FTF is tracking any of the K12 ballot initiatives that are developing. CEO Allvin said FTF has been to a preliminary meeting on the initiative being proposed by Lisa Graham Keegan. She indicated it is a complicated political situation.

*Member Spicker* indicated that if the initiatives fail, it will create renewed interest in sweeping FTF funds.

CEO Allvin indicated that a potential problem with a ballot initiative that includes new funding for K12 approved by voters is that the Legislature might then defund K12 by the same amount. The result would then be no new increase in funding.

Member Strain left the meeting at approximately 3:30 p.m.

#### **FY12 Proposed Meeting Dates and Future Agenda Items**

Chair Saunders initiated a discussion of future meeting dates as listed on the agenda. Ms. Barker Alvarez noted that a concern had been raised about the proposed September meeting date, which conflicts with Rosh Hashana. An alternative of September 22 was suggested.

A motion was made by Member Spicker and seconded by Member Hunter to approve the following future meeting dates: September 22, 2011; January 26, 2012; and, April 26, 2012. The motion carried.

**Adjourn**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.